

Product Manager

Decide what a product should do next, then get engineers, designers and the business to agree.

TYPICAL PAY

\$166,790

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$90k to \$294k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Software companies, banks, retailers, startups, mostly a desk...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Build and ship something small: a website, a game, a school app, a club that runs on a system you designed. That story matters later.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Any subject works, but computer science, engineering, business and economics are the most common. What you need is comfort with da...
- 3 Internships** During college
Summer internships in software, analytics or design. A few large technology companies run product management internships, and they ar...
- 4 A first job next to product** 1 to 3 years
Engineer, data analyst, designer, customer support, consultant or marketer. This is the normal on-ramp and it is not a detour.
- 5 Move into product** Year 2 to year 5
Either an associate product manager program or an internal transfer at the company you already work for. Internal transfers are the easier...
- 6 Own an area** Ongoing
A feature, then a product, then a group of products. Senior, then principal or director.

Pros and cons

- + High pay with no license and no graduate degree required
- + Real influence over what gets built
- + Works in almost any industry, not only technology
- Responsibility for outcomes without authority over anybody
- Getting the first product job is genuinely hard
- Meeting-heavy, with little uninterrupted time

Optional boosts

SQL (Structured Query Language). Split testing. Technical fluency. Pricing and business models.

Good to know

The federal statisticians file you under marketing

The occupation database lists Product Manager as an alternate title for Marketing Managers, alongside Brand Manager and Marketing Director. That is why there is no clean official salary figure for the job,...

The idea started with soap

The origin story usually told is a 1931 memo at Procter and Gamble proposing a brand man who would own one product end to end, including the advertising, the packaging and the profit. Software borr...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Marketing Managers (11-2021.00), the survey group that includes product managers
O*NET OnLine: Marketing Managers, which lists Product Manager as an alternate title
Carnegie Mellon University
USAJOBS, the federal government's official hiring site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/product-manager>



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